

Marsh



Current factors causing loss or decline

Marshlands in common with other similar wetlands have suffered to varying degrees from agricultural improvement and development pressures. Land-use pressures may threaten small marshes in urban areas and those on farmland may also suffer from infilling operations.

Agricultural support mechanisms over the years have encouraged farmers to keep large numbers of livestock on their farms leading to problems of overgrazing and a concomitant decrease in the quality of these habitats. A number of sites, especially in the West of Scotland, have suffered from afforestation. Paradoxically, with changes in agricultural use, a threat lies in some pastures being ungrazed and unmanaged, with a gradual succession to scrub or other wetland types.

Current action

Only a small number of the marshes within Glasgow form part of Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) although most are included within Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs), and therefore receive some protection from development, although this will not affect pressures from agricultural use. A number of wetland creation initiatives occurring in Glasgow are helping to increase the amount of marginal marshy habitat.

Current status

Marsh is a general term, which usually refers to vegetation occurring on a mineral soil (as opposed to organic peat) that has a water table at, or very close to, the surface of the ground for most of the year. Distinction between marshes and fens can be difficult, as they share similar vegetation, and a number of modified fens are included within the general marsh term (other fens are covered by a separate HAP). They are often species-poor and commonly in agricultural use and are frequently dominated by grasses and rushes. However a number of smaller, often urban fringe, composite wetlands, such as small pool margins and marshy depressions at mixed sites, are also included under this heading. Many of these smaller marshes are ungrazed and are likely to be indistinguishable floristically from some of the fen, swamp and reed habitats (larger examples are covered by their respective HAP). Additionally, some types of inundation grasslands, often grazed and usually found on periodically waterlogged soils along the margins of slow moving, watercourses or slowly draining depressions, can be considered as marshy grasslands.

Those areas of marshland that have suffered from agricultural improvement, primarily used for grazing by cattle, can be classified under the broad heading of rushy pasture. They are a very familiar feature of agricultural landscapes throughout Scotland, dominated in the local area mostly by Soft-rush (*Juncus effusus*) or occasionally Sharp-flowered Rush (*J. acutiflorus*). Similar marshy pastures dominated by Purple Moor-grass (*Molinia caerulea*) are absent from Glasgow, although the species occurs on modified peat bogs (see Raised Bog HAP). Where heavily grazed, rush pastures can be botanically poor but may often contain large numbers and varieties of invertebrates, which in turn provide food for a number of wading birds.



Objectives and targets

The national Action Plan for Purple Moor-grass and Rush Pasture aims to secure sympathetic management of 13,500 hectares nationwide, 500 hectares in Scotland, by the year 2000. There is also a target for the experimental recreation of 500 hectares, adjacent to, or near, existing sites, by the year 2005

Objective 1: Ensure no net loss in area of marsh within the City.

Target 1: Retain all existing high quality marshes and encourage creation of new marshes.

Objective 2: Establish area and quality of main marsh sites within the City.

Target 2: Re-survey all main marsh sites to assess quality and identify key sites.

Objective 3: Promote sympathetic management of key marshes.

Target 3: Establish existing management and investigate ideal regimes of key marsh sites.

Objective 4: Increase the total area of marshland within the City.

Target 4: Create marsh habitat as part of wetland and other habitat creation schemes.

Proposed Action with Lead Authorities

Action	Lead	Delivery	Objective
Policy and Legislation			
Ensure the importance of marshland is recognised in Local Plans and Policy Guidelines.	GCC-LS(CG)	GCC-DRS	1
Seek to ensure Policy Planning Guidelines include adequate protection policies for water levels and quality.	GCC-LS(CG)	GCC-DRS, SEPA, SNH	1, 3
Site Safeguard and Management			
Oppose, or propose alternatives to, development applications for land use, which will damage or destroy key areas of marsh.	GCC-LS(CG)	GCC-DRS, SEPA, SNH	1
Encourage landowners and farmers to implement sympathetic management of marshland.	GCC-LS(CG)	FWAG, GCC-LS(CG), SNH	3
Encourage the creation of new marshland at urban or agricultural wetland creation schemes.	GCC-LS(CG)	FWAG, GCC-LS, GfC, SEPA, SNH	4
Advisory			
Provide guidance on marshland management.	GCC-LS(CG)	FWAG, GCC-LS(CG), RSPB, SNH	3
Future Research and Monitoring			
Survey main marshland sites to assess vegetation and condition.	GCC-LS(CG)	GCC-LS(CG), SNH	2
Communication and Publicity			
Encourage awareness and appreciation of marshland habitat.	GCC-LS(CG)	GCC-LS(CRS), SNH	1, 3, 4
Liaise with Lead Agency for national Rush Pasture Habitat Action Plan.	GCC-LS(CG)	GCC-LS(CG)	1, 2, 3, 4
Review progress of plan and actions by 2006.	GCC-LS(CG)	GCC-LS(CG)	1, 2, ,3, 4

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Glasgow City Council: Development and Regeneration Services(GCC-DRS), Glasgow City Council: Land Services(Conservation Group) (GCC-LS(CG),

Glasgow City Council: Culture and Leisure Services (GCC-CLS), Glasgow City Council: Education Services (GCC-ES), Glasgow City Council: Land Services Countryside Ranger Service (GCC-LS(CRS)),

Scottish Ornithologists' Club (SOC), Greenspace for Communities(GfC), British Waterways (BW), Forestry Commission (FC), Farming Wildlife Advisory Group (FWAG), The WISE Group (TWISE)

Glasgow Natural History Society (GNHS), Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA), Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH), Scottish Wildlife Trust (SWT).

Clyde Amphibian and Reptile Group (CARG), Butterfly Conservation (BC), Concern for Swifts (CfS)